

A.G. Schneiderman Secures Agreements With Century 21, JCPenney, And Petland Discounts To Ensure Equal Access For People With Disabilities

125 Stores Across The State Will Now Meet Accessibility Requirements Set Forth By The Americans With Disabilities Act & New York State Law

Schneiderman: Our Office Is Committed To Combating Discrimination Against People With Disabilities

NEW YORK - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced agreements with three major retail chains to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to the merchandise, services, and amenities provided by each of their New York based stores. Under the statewide agreements, Century 21, JCPenney, and Petland Discounts will take significant steps to ensure that each of their New York stores complies with the accessibility requirements and design standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

"Ensuring that people with disabilities are provided the same retail shopping experience that other customers enjoy helps make the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act a reality," said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. "My office is committed to combating discrimination faced by people with disabilities, and to helping promote accessibility across our state. I commend Century 21, JCPenney, and Petland Discounts for agreeing to take the steps necessary to make their stores fully accessible for all New Yorkers."

These cases are part of Attorney General Schneiderman's ongoing investigation into the accessibility of retail establishments and other public accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The Attorney General deployed undercover investigators and retained experts to examine Century 21, JCPenney, and Petland Discounts stores to determine if they comply with state and federal accessibility laws. Based on the undercover investigation and architectural surveys of the stores, the Attorney General's office identified numerous impediments and barriers for people with disabilities.

Under the agreements, the three retailers have agreed to:

- retain an independent ADA compliance consultant, approved by the Attorney General's office, to assist with the implementation and enforcement of the agreements;
- conduct a survey of every store located in New York to identify changes necessary to achieve compliance with state and federal accessibility standards;
- conform all elements of each store that deviate from state and federal accessibility laws;
- train employees on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and on the protocols used to afford people with disabilities equal access to the goods, services, and accommodations afforded to people without disabilities; and
- certify that all new construction complies with state and federal accessibility laws and standards.

Century 21, JCPenney, and Petland Discounts also have agreed to pay a total of \$120,000 to New York

State to resolve the investigations.

Disability rights advocates hailed the Attorney General's actions.

Paul Tobin, CEO and President of the United Spinal Association, said, "The agreements with Century 21, JCPenney, and Petland Discounts secured by Attorney General Schneiderman are extremely significant. Although the ADA was enacted twenty years ago, wheelchair users, including our members and disabled veterans, still find themselves being barred from accessing many retail stores. Access for people with disabilities is required by law. With these agreements, Attorney General Schneiderman not only has ensured access for thousands of individuals, but has put retailers on notice that violations of the ADA and other accessibility laws will not be tolerated in New York."

Paula Wolf, President of Disabled in Action, said "I applaud Attorney General Schneiderman for his commitment to the civil rights of all New Yorkers. Ensuring compliance with federal and state accessibility laws removes barriers to access for countless New Yorkers. Compliance with the ADA is not just the law, but is good for business by increasing the number of potential customers and improving the shopping experience for all."

These cases are being handled by Assistant Attorneys General Brooke P. Davis and Sunita Kini-Tandon, under the supervision of Civil Rights Bureau Chief Kristen Clarke, Chief Counsel for Civil Rights Spencer Freedman, and Executive Deputy Attorney General for Social Justice Janet Sabel.

The Civil Rights Bureau of the Attorney General's Office is committed to combating discrimination faced by and promoting accessibility for individuals with disabilities across New York State. To file a complaint, contact the Attorney General's Office at (212) 416-8250, civil.rights@ag.ny.gov or visit www.ag.ny.gov.